

In the claims

Claim 27. (Amended) A method of implementing a multi-vendor internet commerce system (MV-ICS) for efficiently enabling e-commerce through the Internet for a plurality of vendors and a plurality of consumers, the method comprising:

providing a centrally implemented multi-vendor central processing unit (MV-CPU) that acts as a shared processing location for the plurality of vendors;

providing a centrally implemented multi-vendor shared datastore (MV-SD) that acts cooperatively with the MV-CPU and serves as a shared datastore for the plurality of vendors;

providing one website hosted on at least one server, wherein the website sells products to the consumers from the plurality of vendors, wherein the MV-SD includes at least one database with detailed product descriptions sufficient to make a purchase decision for products from the plurality of vendors,

providing a universal shopping cart for a consumer to add items to purchase from different vendors,

wherein said one website allows consumers to buy products from multiple vendors without having to leave the one website to view detailed product information from different vendors and without having to enter another vendor website to add products from different vendors into the universal shopping cart; and

wherein said one website has a checkout process enabling the consumer to submit one order containing products from multiple vendors and placed in said universal shopping cart, wherein the MV-ICS has logic that takes said one order and communicates information to the vendors about any items in the one order purchased from that vendor, the amount of the purchase, and any shipping information.

Claim 28. (Amended) The method of claim 27 wherein said logic comprises conveyance logic in the MV-ICS communicating information to each vendor about any items purchased from that vendor, the amount of the purchase, and any shipping information, wherein if the MV-ICS acts as the merchant of record, the checkout logic will debit consumer's credit card or account or, if the merchants of record are the vendors themselves, conveyance logic will transmit the payment data to the vendors so that the amount of the purchase[d] from each vendor may be debited.

Claim 29. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 27 wherein the shopping cart comprises a persistent storage structure that is capable of holding items for purchases that have been selected by the consumer from a plurality of vendors until those items are checked out.

Claim 30. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 27 wherein the MV-SD includes at least one vendor database wherein a vendor stores rules regarding checkout process for that vendor and includes at least one rule selected from the following: shipping information, tax tables, discounts or markups.

Claim 31. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 27 wherein the MV-SD provides a common shopping cart facility and a common checkout facility for the plurality of vendors.

Claim 32. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 27 wherein the MV-SD furnishes all textual description, graphics, and price information pertaining to the selected items, along with a vendor profile for MV-ICS to perform the checkout process, which includes calculating the cost correctly for the item selected for purchase.

Claim 33. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 27 wherein the product database represents at least some of the products offered for sale by participating vendors.

Claim 34. (New) The method of claim 27 wherein the shopping cart comprises a server-side

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persistent storage structure that is capable of holding items for purchases that have been selected by the consumer from a plurality of vendors until those items are checked out.

Claim 35. (New) The method of claim 27 wherein for each vendor providing products in said one order, the Multi-Vendor CPU calculates the invoice and creates the shipping bill for the items checked out.

Claim 36. (New) The method of claim 27 wherein full description of items selected by the consumer need not be transmitted from the vendor websites to the Multi-Vendor CPU.

Claim 37. (New) The method of claim 27 wherein the Multi-Vendor checkout process allows the user to make choice regarding Bill-To/Ship-To addresses, shipping method for each product/merchant, and distinct credit cards for each merchant for when the entire order includes products from multiple merchants who do not all support the same payment method.

Claim 38. (New) The method of claim 27 wherein the checkout process enables the consumer to submit one order containing products from multiple vendors to the MV-ICS, where the multiple vendors are the merchants of record, and can preview and then receive a single combined order form with separate, distinct invoices showing subtotals for each of the multiple vendors.